

A Robbery Gone Wrong by metal_jenny_blog

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Language: English

Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Sara Hopper, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper & Sara Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-01-11

Updated: 2018-01-11

Packaged: 2022-04-03 15:20:34

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,996

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Hopper is involved in a robbery. While he clings to life, he gets a visitor.

Inspired by artwork by @sirlsplayland at:

https://archiveofourown.org/works/13175724/chapters/30136545?show_comments=true&view_full_work=false#comment_141570219

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In a town like Hawkins, everyone knows everybody.

Beside her bed, the phone jangled loudly. Joyce's eyes shot open. It's almost as if she heard the phone ring in her dream. It's borne of motherhood and years of sleepless nights, and the craziness of last year - she'll never sleep deeply again.

She blindly grabbed in the dark for the beside lamp button and then picked up the receiver.

"Hello?"

"Joyce? It's Dale down at County Emergency."

Joyce sits upright in bed, her stomach falling to her knees. She knows Dale. She was on duty the night she went into labor with Will. The night they had to go in and get him because he was wedged far up in her ribcage in the breech position. Dale was the nurse who held her hand and helped her breathe, while Lonnie slept off another bender in some nameless woman's bed.

Fighting to control her anxiety again, she spoke. "What is it?"

"Chief Hopper has come into the emergency room. They were called to a robbery at the twenty-four hour convenience store on Meadowbank. He was shot trying to disarm one of them. He's alive, it caught him in the shoulder, but he's going to need surgery tonight."

"Shit. Shit! Ok. I'm on my way. His daughter is here but Jonathon can stay with them." She grabbed the jeans she pulled off before falling into bed that night and struggled into them. "Is he awake, talking?"

“He walked in himself. Powell was trying to help him but he kept shaking him off. He was in a fair amount of pain though. Once we convinced him to get into bed it started to show. We gave him a hit of morphine and he’s fighting us a little less. We’re just waiting for the surgeon on call to finish taking out an appendix, then he’ll go straight in.”

“Ok. I’m leaving now. I have to let Jonathan know where I am and then I’ll be there. Thanks Dale.”

“No problem Joyce. Don’t drive crazy, ok? Just get here in one piece.”

Joyce hung up the phone and walked briskly to Jonathan’s door. She knocked, then twisted the handle and opened it.

Jonathan was awake almost immediately. He too has lost all ability for deep slumber.

“Mom?”

“Hey baby. Listen, I just got a call from the hospital - Hop’s in there, he’s been in an accident.”

“Is he ok?” Jonathan’s eyes widened in alarm in the gloom of the bedroom.

“I hope so. He was caught up in a robbery. He got shot. He needs surgery tonight.”

“Ok. Do we tell El?”

“Not right now. Just stay with them tonight. If I’m not back in the morning when they wake up, then you might need to bring her to the hospital. I don’t want her hearing it at school before I’ve had a chance to tell her, ok?”

“Ok Mom. Go. We’ll be fine.”

Joyce smoothed his hair and planted a kiss on his forehead and left the room. Very unlike any other day, both her purse and keys were waiting on the table. Without breaking her stride she swept them up,

pulled the door shut behind her and got in the car. Starting the engine, she put her foot flat to the floor as she peeled out of the driveway and nosed the car onto the road.

The morphine made everything sound like it was under ten feet of water. He wiggled his toes and fingers. It was like floating in honey.

It was nice though. Nice, nice. Everything was fuzzy fuzzy. A nurse came by and lifted the bandage on his shoulder. That wasn't nice. Ouch, ouch. He snarled. At least, he thought he did. Mean nurse, poking and prodding him.

"Chief Hopper?"

There was a voice. It sounded like it was down the end of a long, long corridor.

"Chief Hopper?"

Closer now.

"We're taking you in now. Get you patched up, ok?"

He wanted to answer, but his tongue felt too big for his mouth.

"Hrrmph."

The bed started to move down the hallway.

Joyce practically ran through the doors into Emergency and skidded to a stop at the nurses station.

"Jim Hopper, where is he?"

The bored-looking duty nurse snapped her gum and reached agonisingly slow for an admissions folder. She turned the pages, unhurried.

"Hmmm... here we are. They took him to surgery. You want to wait,

there's seats over there." She gestured to the hard plastic chairs to her right with her chewed ballpoint pen.

"Can I talk to his doctor, someone who knows what's going on?" Joyce fought to keep the panic out of her voice.

"Doc's in surgery. Wait over there." She gestured harder with the pen.

Joyce sighed and went to the chairs. Taking a seat, she bounced her foot and willed her mind to stay away from the worst possible scenario. But it was impossible. All she could think about was that she and Hop had finally gotten their shit together, finally stopped dancing around the idea of being together and actually done something about it - and now, if he didn't make it, she didn't know what she'd do. She hadn't told him she loved him enough, hadn't kissed him enough, hadn't felt his arms around her enough. It wasn't over. It couldn't be.

He had to make it.

She looked up to the sound of footsteps and saw Powell walking towards her. She gave him a wan smile as he approached.

"Alright Chief, we're getting ready to push the joy juice now. Deep breaths from the mask, ok?"

The cool sting of the anesthetic pooled in his hand as he felt the metallic taste of the gas on the back of his tongue. The jostling to get him on the table and strapped down had mercifully stopped. His head still felt like it was stuffed with cotton wool and his tongue was too spongy.

"Joyce?" he murmured thickly.

Someone leaned over him. A woman's voice spoke. "It's ok Chief. I called her. She's on her way."

Hopper's eyes fluttered as the sedative began to take hold. The wave pulled him under and plunged him into nothingness.

“What happened Powell?”

The policeman leaned back in the molded plastic chair with a sigh. He rubbed his hand on the back of the head before he spoke.

“We got a call to the convenience store that a robbery was happening. We were around the corner at the diner. By the time we’d got there, they’d ransacked the till and were going back to their car. They’d busted old Harold’s head open and left him behind the register. They were loading into the car and Hop started approaching. The driver just pulled out a gun and shot him. Didn’t even blink. Scariest fucking thing I’ve ever seen. If it’d been an inch to the right, he’d be singing in the heavenly choir.” Powell shook his head.

Joyce put her head in her hands. The last robbery of note in the town had happened when she was in high school and Jerry Caskill and Andy Cross had tried to rip off a cigarette truck. She wanted to say that stuff like this didn’t happen in Hawkins. But after last year, that wasn’t true. In fact, a robbery was positively normal.

She chided herself. The man she loved, the father of the daughter she called her own, was lying in surgery. Her life wasn’t normal, it was a damn shit show. When were her and Hop going to catch a break? When was their family going to get a chance to breathe?

“I’m going to get a coffee,” Powell said. “You want?”

Joyce nodded. As he got up to go to the machine, she scrubbed a hand across her eyes.

He had to be alright.

A void was supposed to be dark. Like a black hole. That’s what Sara told him. An endless, inky black. No color. No light. Infinite.

But this void was white. He supposed it was the same as a black hole, but white. It was as Sara described. Silent. Unending.

“His O2 sats are a bit low.”

“His pressure isn’t great either.”

“Come on Chief, where you going?”

He heard footsteps coming towards him. Edges began to take shape in the vast milky landscape.

“Pressure is dropping. He’s bradying down.”

“Starting compressions.”

The figure became clearer. Small. A girl. A blue coat and blond pigtails. Hopper felt his chest tighten.

“Sara?” he croaked.

“How’s his pressure?”

“Asystole!”

“Epinephrine now! Charge paddles to 200!”

“You shouldn’t be here.”

Sara stared up at him. Hopper fell to his knees.

“Are you real?” Hopper choked. His eyes blurred with tears.

“No,” she said. “But they are.”

“They?”

“Joyce. And Will. And Jonathan. And Eleven. She needs you most of all.”

A keening sob wrenched itself from Hopper’s throat. The tears spilled over his cheeks.

“I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry you got sick. I’m so sorry I couldn’t save you. I think about it all the time, if I had stepped in...”

Sara smiled softly. “You need to go back. It’s not time yet. They need you more.”

Hopper reached out to her and pulled her into a hug. She was warm and soft and smelled just as he remembered, and his heart squeezed again.

“But I want you too,” he whispered.

“Clear!”

The paddles buzzed to life, Hopper’s broad chest twitching under the jolt.

“No rhythm. Still asystole.”

“Another round of epi and charge paddles to 300.”

“Come on Chief, enough screwing around. Come back to us...”

“I love you Sara.”

“I love you too Daddy. I’ll see you again. Eleven needs her Daddy too. And Joyce needs you. You found some happiness. You have to go back.”

Hopper sighed as Sara gently stepped from his arms. She smiled serenely. The edges of her blue coat became wavy, and the light

began to dim. Fresh tears welled in Hopper's eyes as the void faded to grey, to black...and she was gone.

"Clear!"

Everyone held their breath. The monitor surged from flat line to peaks.

"He's back!"

The operating room let out their collective breath. The surgeon leaned close to Hopper's ear.

"Do not scare me like that again. You hear me?"

His eyes peeled themselves open and took a moment to adjust to his surroundings. As his vision cleared, he saw Joyce. She was in a chair pulled close to the bedside, folded at the waist and gripping his hand. He twitched his hand and she sat up.

"Hopper, oh my God!" She kissed his hand, tears springing in her eyes.

"Hey," he mumbled. His mouth felt dry like sandpaper. He worked his jaw a few times and tried again. "Hey Joyce."

Joyce cupped his hand to her face. Her other hand flitted to the top of his head, his cheek, his chest, like a stuttering bird. Her eyes drank him in, making sure he was real.

"You are in so much trouble, mister," she blurted, her tears finally breaking free. "You almost died. I look relieved right now but rest assured I am also furious with you."

Hopper's mouth twitched upward. Joyce gave him a wet smile and kissed his forehead. She pulled her chair closer, as close as she could to him.

They sat in silence for a moment. Hopper sighed.

“I saw her, Joyce.”

“Saw who?”

“Sara,” he replied. He turned his head to look down at Joyce. “She came to me. She told me I had to go back. That you and the kids need me. El needs me. I wanted to stay. But I didn’t. Because I need you all too.”

Joyce stroked the soft hair on his cheek. “We more than need you, Hop. We love you.”

Hop smiled again and his eyes fluttered. Joyce squeezed his hand. The interaction had been enough to exhaust him. As his eyelids closed, he murmured:

“I’m glad I came back.”